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NAZI DEFEAT FIRST STEP TOWARD AVENGING JAPANESE ATROCITIES

THE nation-wide anger aroused by the joint Army-Navy report of January 27 concerning Japanese atrocities against American and Filipino prisoners of war indicates how quickly complacency disappears when the war is brought home to the American people in personal terms. The United States is a long way from the fighting fronts, but it is now clear that when Americans get a glimpse of the true face of the enemy, they realize deeply that this is a war for their own survival and feel the same hatred as millions of people in countries directly in the path of the Axis.

Yet, because most Americans lack any genuine, personal experience of the war, it is worth emphasizing that the unspeakable treatment of the men captured on Bataan and Corregidor is part of a larger picture. That such treatment—in violation of the Geneva Prisoners of War Convention to which Japan pledged itself after Pearl Harbor—was not reserved for Americans alone is suggested by the greater number of Filipinos involved. And we know from Foreign Minister Eden's statement in the Commons on January 28 that captured British soldiers have been dealt with in an equally brutal fashion. Nor should it be forgotten that the actions of Japan's military leaders and troops toward Americans in the Philippines in 1942 are simply a symbol of what has been done on a vaster scale in China during seven years of war. In scope and depravity no crimes committed by Japan elsewhere can rival the wanton murder and rape committed inside defenseless Nanking by the Imperial Army in December 1937.

TWO FRONTS—ONE ENEMY. Nor is there anything peculiarly Japanese about the events described in the past week from Washington and London. Some commentators and persons in public life have tended to react in racial terms by referring disparagingly to the size or color of the Japanese. But the fact remains that the despicable actions of the

enemy in Asia are not fundamentally unlike the vicious practices of his Nazi ally in the West. The sufferings and tortures inflicted by the Japanese may vary from those of the Nazis in detail, but they are certainly not different in kind. To think otherwise would be to forget the crime of Lidice against the Czechs, the bloody extermination of the Jews during the past eleven years, the murder of many thousands of Poles, the employment of mass graves in occupied Russia and the fiendish use of lethal gas chambers to kill civilians.

The conclusion appears inescapable: we are not fighting an enemy of a particular race or nationality, but rather the moral degradation and corruption of the human spirit that are the hallmarks of fascism wherever it appears. We have at the present time no reason to distinguish between Germany and Japan on a moral basis. The only distinctions that are tenable are those dictated by military strategy and the conditions required for decisive victory.

GERMANY STILL COMES FIRST. It is necessary to make this point because advocates of a strategy of defeating Japan first may now attempt to gain a new lease on life, in a last desperate effort to reverse the decisions reached at Teheran for an invasion of western Europe. In reality nothing could be more destructive of our objective of defeating Japan as rapidly as possible than to defer the plans of the United Nations for an all-out attack on the Nazi foe. Germany is more exhausted than Japan, is closer to the centers of United Nations strength and, in a political sense, is a more dangerous enemy than Japan. Its defeat is therefore the first logical objective of the Allied countries.

It may truly be said that the path to Tokyo leads through Berlin, for any attempt to concentrate on Japan now, while allowing Germany to continue in the field, would result in a serious dispersion of American and British strength. This is well understood

by military leaders in Washington and London, and it would be most unfortunate if popular clamor should be stirred up for the adoption of another line of strategy. To give way in emotional fashion to the desire to send a fleet immediately against Tokyo, or to carry out any other action not yet made feasible by our military position in the Pacific, might put us in the position of a fighter who becomes so enraged that he forgets his own defenses and blindly strikes out at his opponent.

SHALL WE USE GAS? At least one writer has suggested that, because of the anger aroused by Japanese atrocities, Americans may now be less opposed than they would hitherto have been to the use of poison gas by United States forces in the Pacific. The launching of gas attacks, it is said, could be very helpful in occupying many islands under Japanese control. But the immediate practical repercussions of gas warfare are incalculable. The effects could not be confined to the Pacific islands, but would almost certainly be felt in China, Russia, England, Italy and Yugoslavia, and might ultimately reach New York or the American West Coast. The only restrictions on the frightfulness thereby unleashed would lie in whatever limitations gas may possess as an instru-

ment of warfare.

Clearly the decision to use this weapon is not one that the United States would have the right to make by itself, for this country, separated as it is from the theatres of war by two great oceans, must bear in mind that the effects would be visited on the peoples of Allied countries much more than on the American people. It is true that Japan appears already to have used some gases in China, but it is very questionable whether Chungking, which has only a very limited chemical industry and at present lacks the means of importing large quantities of war materials, would wish to see the United Nations reply by using poison gas.

The moral issue is as serious as the material one. The United Nations are pledged to fight this war with all their resources to complete victory, but they are also pledged to a proper regard for human decency. If the Axis should initiate gas warfare, the Allied countries would have to reply in kind. But it is not in keeping with the anti-Axis cause to descend to the brutality and mass disregard for human life that characterize the methods employed by the enemy.

LAWRENCE K. ROSINGER

FRENCH SEEK FULL RECOGNITION ON EVE OF ALLIED INVASION

With the recent arrival in Washington of Edwin C. Wilson, United States envoy to the French Committee of National Liberation, the provisional French capital in Algiers is anxiously awaiting the State Department's decision on the authority it will recognize in France immediately following liberation of the country. The British seem to be attempting to eliminate sources of friction between themselves and the French Committee, as indicated by Prime Minister Churchill's visit with de Gaulle at Marrakech on January 12 and 13. But Britain will recognize the Committee as the French provisional government only if the United States approves this step. It is to Washington, therefore, that the French look for indications of post-invasion political developments.

Although the French Committee is not the only representative of enemy-occupied countries that is wondering about its role in Allied invasion plans—thus far Norway alone has succeeded in securing definite Allied approval for its proposed provisional authority—it is in a particularly weak position because it has been given merely limited recognition by the Allies and is not a "government." Under the circumstances, the French Committee undoubtedly fears the United States and Britain may by-pass it, setting up a military régime, as in Italy. Several important developments, however, have recently done much to improve the Committee's chances of securing Allied recognition as the temporary government of France.

TOWARD PARLIAMENTARY RULE: The record that the Provisional Constituent Assembly made for itself in the session ending on January 22 reinforced de Gaulle's claim that he will not saddle France with a dictatorship but will follow republican principles. Although the Assembly was established by decree of the Committee of Liberation, it did not act as a rubber stamp, and debates were free from any evidence of servility. This emergence of a parliamentary check on the executive seems to be, in fact, one of the major developments in the history of Free France since 1940 and marks a return to government by discussion. The Assembly—which is made up of representatives of the resistance movement, the pre-war parliament and the colonial councils—showed itself opposed to personal power or "presidential government" by exercising independent judgment on serious issues concerning the future of France. Among these questions none was more important than the method whereby the home government would be reestablished in the wake of the Allied armies. The proposal of de Gaulle and other members of the Committee, who are eager to secure a popular mandate as soon as possible, that local elections for the provisional government be held immediately following liberation met with the objection that any elections held before at least four-fifths of the French voters have returned to their home districts might be won by minority groups. As a re-

sult of the Assembly's insistence that even temporary government should not rest on minority support, the Committee has abandoned its original electoral plan and is drawing up a new one for discussion when the Assembly reconvenes on February 29.

On the question of punishing Vichyites who voluntarily collaborated with the Axis, the Assembly has also served as a clearinghouse for French opinion. Before the debate, the Committee had decided that all trials should be postponed until France had been liberated and a regular government installed. The consensus of the Assembly, however, was that immediate action must be taken to assure the resistance movement in France that collaborators with the Nazis would be brought to trial, thus preventing disorderly punishments later in which innocent persons might suffer. Communist members of the Assembly held that summary action should be taken at once against Vichyites now under detention in North Africa, but the majority was opposed to any extraordinary procedures and insisted that military courts—the regular French device for handling crimes against the state—be used. Accordingly, early in February a military court will try a group of former custodians of Vichy's concentration camps in North Africa.

REVAMPING THE EMPIRE. The French Committee's hopes for full approval by the Allies rest not only on the adoption of parliamentary practices, but also on its efforts to set its colonial house in order. Realizing the need for further industrialization and improvement of living conditions in its African colonies if real bonds of unity are to exist between them and the mother country in the future, the Committee called the first French imperial conference since 1940. The meeting was held in Brazzaville, French Equatorial Africa, from January 30 to February 4, and the recommendations of the gov-

ernors of the African colonies will form the basis for action following the liberation of France. Another important modification in French overseas affairs—and one that should be favorably regarded in Britain and the United States—occurred in Beirut on January 3, when the French-Lebanese crisis of last November was officially ended. By transferring the collection of customs and the tobacco monopoly from French to Lebano-Syrian authorities, the mandatory power took a step toward recognizing the independence of these Arab states as London and Washington had urged.

POWER POLITICS AND FRANCE. Some de Gaullists in Algiers are reported to be hoping that Anglo-American interest in good relations with France will be increased, not by the record established by the French Committee, but by the efforts of the two Western powers to create a sphere of influence in Europe. They argue that the Russian-Polish border dispute implies that the Allies intend to divide post-war Europe, with the U.S.S.R. dominating eastern Europe and Britain and the United States the west. French eagerness to run their own affairs immediately following the liberation of their country is understandable, but there can be no doubt that recognition won chiefly as a result of power politics could only result, sooner or later, in a conflict between the Big Three that would ruin not only them but France. The French have nothing to gain from strife among the Allies, for their country is inevitably a battleground whenever the powers resort to force instead of collective security to assure their safety.

Fortunately, it is not on an Allied scramble for European zones of influence, but on the imminence of invasion and the immediate need to settle as many problems as possible connected with the liberation of France that the French Committee's greatest hope for American approval rests. As evidence accumulates that de Gaulle is indispensable in the liberation of his country, and that he and his organization are sincerely interested in maintaining democratic government, the possibility that the Committee will be recognized as the provisional government of France is improved.

WINIFRED N. HADSEL

What is the Western economic stake in Asia? How much would it cost the metropolitan countries to give up their empires in the East? How will the rest of the world adjust itself to the rise of new nations in a free and industrialized Asia? READ—

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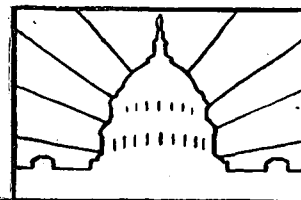
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Washington News Letter



JAN. 31.—As a result of Argentina's severance of relations with Germany and Japan on January 26, the Western Hemisphere at last presents the unified anti-Axis front sought at the Third Conference of Foreign Ministers at Rio de Janeiro in 1942, when it adopted a resolution recommending that every American Republic break diplomatic relations with Germany and its major allies. On January 28 Argentina implemented its political step by suspending communications and commercial relations with the Axis.

U.S. POLICY CHANGING. Pressure from the United States, with the collaboration of Britain, forced the Argentine break. This occurred after a series of incidents which suggests that Washington is casting aside its policy of restraint toward governments unfriendly to us. On January 25 the State Department announced its refusal to recognize the Bolivian revolutionary government on the ground that it was linked with "subversive groups hostile to the Allied cause." On January 28 Washington suspended Caribbean oil shipments to Spain "pending a reconsideration of trade and general relations."

The State Department regards the development in Argentina as a mixed blessing. While the break with the Axis has obvious advantages for the present, it preserves at least temporarily the régime of President Ramirez, who has been unfriendly to this country in foreign affairs and to democracy in domestic affairs. Therefore, in declaring on January 26 that "it will be most gratifying to all the Allied nations to learn that Argentina has broken diplomatic relations with Germany and Japan," Secretary of State Hull added this reservation: "It must be assumed from her action that Argentina will now proceed energetically to adopt the other measures which all of the American Republics have concerted for the security of the continent."

With its abandonment of neutrality the Argentine government did not eliminate all the totalitarian features of the Ramirez régime, although the pro-Axis newspaper, *Pampero*, was suppressed, and on January 27 the three most fascist-minded Ministers in the Cabinet resigned: Dr. Gustavo Martinez Zuviria, Minister of Justice and Public Instruction, notorious anti-Semite; Gen. Luis Cesar Perlinger, Minister of the Interior, and Gen. Diego Mason, Minister of Agriculture. But the most influential of Ramirez's advisers throughout his anti-United States

period, Juan Peron, a leader in the so-called "colonels' clique," stayed on as Minister of Labor.

Argentina's severance of Axis relations came after this country's nonrecognition of Bolivia, which Buenos Aires had recognized on January 3. Eleven days later Secretary of State Hull said that preliminary information suggested that "outside forces" inimical to the United Nations had inspired the Bolivian revolution. These "outside forces" were reported authoritatively, although unofficially, to be Argentinian. Washington decided to use the issue of Bolivian recognition as a lever to force a change in either the leadership or policy of the Argentine government, whose strict neutrality was providing Germany and Japan with opportunities to spy on all the Americas from their Buenos Aires embassies.

PRESSURE ON ARGENTINA. By diplomatic intimation to the Argentine government and by inspired press articles, Washington warned President Ramirez of two steps this country might take: 1. application of economic sanctions against Argentina, which might precipitate a political crisis inside the country; 2. publication of a document in the State Department's possession exposing subversive plottings in neighboring countries, which might arouse South American opinion against Argentina.

On January 21 the Argentine government disclosed a portentous concern about espionage within its jurisdiction. Announcing that the British were detaining Osmar Alberto Hellmuth, Argentine auxiliary consul to Barcelona as an enemy agent," the government said: "As information supplied by the British Foreign Office may imply the existence of an espionage organization in our country, of which Hellmuth was said to be a member, the government has ordered an ample investigation and has given all information to the federal police."

Although Secretary Hull refrained from mentioning Argentina when he announced nonrecognition of Bolivia, the threat of sanctions and of disclosure still existed for the Ramirez government. Since its prestige at home, however, would have suffered from an admission that revision in its policy resulted from the instigation of the United States, Argentina followed the line it had set for itself in the Hellmuth case and gave Axis espionage as its reason for breaking relations with Germany and Japan. Argentina's change in policy has brought no alteration in the Administration's nonrecognition of Bolivia.

BLAIR BOLLES

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